

By Ethan Snyder

## Zach Porter

I had the distinct pleasure of being able to call Zach Porter my dear friend during my last year at Wash U. While it might have been our fraternity, Sigma Nu, that was the catalyst of our friendship, I think that had you asked either of us how we became friends, we would say that there was no real other option; it was fate. We would joke that the one of us was following the other around, and how we couldn't seem to "get away from each other." Although, we both definitely were happy with how the way things played out. In the fall, Zach and I had 2 classes together, meaning we got to spend a thrilling 7 hours of class across 5 different periods together—for which maybe 2 of those hours were fully spent paying attention to the lecture at hand. When we first crossed paths, I was a senior and Zach, in his sophomoric state, was a pledge, so a slight power dynamic might have been expected. However, knowing Zach now, I was a fool for thinking in any sense that my fraternally-appointed authority would be well-received or respected. In fact, I think the only time I exercised my authority successfully was making him sit next to me in our statistics class, after he proceeded to walk right past me while I was sitting alone. This class was really the genesis of our all-too-short friendship. I look back so fondly on those lectures, during which we made slight fun of each other; always a slight competition on who could come to class with the best bit prepared.

I mean it when I say I had a unique friendship with Zach. It was almost sibling-esque in our back-and-forth, coming up with bigger, more grandiose words to insult each other with while at the same time having long talks about crushes, girlfriends, our goals, our futures, and why the whole basis of fraternities are founded on fundamentally immoral grounds—this was staunchly Zach's opinion and I'll admit he had very persuasive points. People would ask what was up with us whenever we were together, a question to which the response was invariably, "that's just the way they are."

I have plenty of stories I can share about Zach, but I want to share one in particular which really encapsulates our friendship and speaks to who Zach was as a person. It's abundantly clear how kind, wise, and funny he was. On top of all this, Zach was also quite devious and loved a good prank. Unfortunately (AND definitely fortunately), he liked to pull some of these pranks on me. On February 12th I got a text from Zach asking when my birthday was. My birthday being on February 27th, I told him so, thinking it was sweet of him to ask since he knew it was coming up. However, I should've known that there had to have been more. And indeed, there was. The next day Zach takes a picture of me in class, obviously a terrible one, but I don't think much of it, at least not until that night when I get an Instagram notification, "Zach Porter tagged you in a story." and I go to click on it, to find it reading "Happy Birthday Ethan!", with the picture he took from class earlier. Obviously confused, I text him saying "you know it's not my birthday, right?", to which he coolly replied, "I know". Because of the post, I received about 7 happy birthday texts from people who had seen it, to which I had to reply that Porter had pranked them, and that it wasn't really my birthday. This was something Porter did twice more before my real birthday, each time with different people wishing me a happy birthday because of his picture of a new

terrible photo of me. He would also get other people to post these fake birthday posts for me, even threatening me once with a birthday post if I didn't go do what he wanted (which unfortunately ended up with it being my birthday for the 8th time in the last two months). It eventually hit the point where I would no longer tell people about Porter's antics if I received a text, I just thanked them kindly.

While the posts eventually stopped, Porter's pranks never did. Even if they annoyed me here and there in any given moment, they were always pretty hilarious to look back on—and most importantly I recognize they came out of a place of love. I'm not sure how to end this story exactly, but then again, it's never easy to end a story that had really just started. I think from the beginning of our friendship, I was always going to carry a little bit of Porter with me. Now, however, I aim to do so with intent. Zach taught me to see the world as a positive place, but with room to improve, and of course, with places to be a little devious.